

Linda Clair
Evening Meeting and Weekend Meditation Retreat
8–10 November 2019, Barcelona, Spain
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3c – Sunday afternoon discussion

Question: I have a question because I have to go. I feel very good.

Linda: You look really good too.

Question: I haven't had any pain for a while in mediation. I don't think that's positive because when I have felt pain it was easier to be here, and now I need to use the counting. The last two retreats have been a confirmation for me that I'm on the right path. When other people ask questions I feel very connected to your answers so I don't need to ask anything and it's a confirmation I'm doing well. I'm usually led by intuition and I like to challenge myself so sometimes I sit for an hour but then sit longer. When I'm sitting I don't usually move except this movement of stretching my spine when I breathe in sometimes. Is that okay?

Linda: You sit very still and very straight.

Question: I tend to hunch over a bit, so then I breathe into my belly and stretch, straighten my spine.

Linda: That's fine

Question: I identify with what P. said about feeling like a rock and feeling the breathing too.

Linda: The rock is very good. I remember feeling like that too. I felt at times like a statue and I was just the breath. It's a very mature stage.

Question: I would also like to thank you because you are there. And I would also like to thank everyone else here because I feel part of everyone. Thank you.

This retreat was the most silent that we've had. If you remember the first one in Cordoba... (lots of laughter)

Question: That's part of the learning.

Interjections: We were a bit unconscious.

Question: I'm going to pack up unless you have something else to tell me.

Linda: Keep doing exactly what you're doing. Very good.

Question: I felt a horrible pain in the last meditation. There was a point when I started feeling really hot and felt like I would blow up.

Linda: Where was the pain?

Question: It was in my back. It was really intense. Then it moved to the legs, my back. At times it felt like it was going to go away and then I felt heat. It was really difficult.

Linda: How do you feel now?

Question: I feel good but a bit hot now.

Linda: It's all to do with the energy building up in your body. When it's like that try to use your breath to stabilise you.

Question: Sometimes with the breath, it's like it moves everywhere.

Linda: Try and concentrate a bit more on the belly, the abdomen, not to try to get away from anything but just to keep yourself stable to be able to cope with the pressure.

Question: I feel relief when I focus on my breath and sometimes it goes away for a while. Maybe it's because of the amount of time sitting, because in the morning I was quite well but as the day has gone by I felt this.

Linda: But this is still "well". It's not easy but it's very good.

Question: In what way does your relationship with the people you love and care about the most change – like your children, husband, parents?

Linda: In what way does it change?

Question: In what way do your relationships with your children, your parents, your partner change? In what way do you perceive them?

Linda: It becomes less "mine." There's less attachment because there's not this fear of losing them. That means I can be more real and honest with them. And when there's not that fear of losing someone you actually become closer with them. But you don't centre your whole world around your family anymore – not that I did so much before.

I know a lot of people say family is everything but I don't feel that's true. They're important to me but not everything. And I feel closer to them than I ever did but I feel just as close to a lot of people in this room. It's like everything becomes more homogenous, the love isn't focused on someone. My children will always be my children but it doesn't mean they're more special than anyone else. I don't depend on

them for some sort of identity in me. It is a bit different because they're my children, but not that different.

Question: I have always had a difficult relationship with my mother. Since I started meditation that relationship has changed and it seems to me that she has changed. Maybe it is because in the past when I went to see her I felt like she was going to hurt me. I feel to me that now that I don't have that sensation that she's going to hurt me, she's more relaxed. That's why yesterday I was telling you about my labelling people. I feel because I label them, they have the power to hurt me.

Linda: You give them the power to hurt you. So that's a bit different.

What you realise in the end is that sometimes you will feel a bit hurt, but you don't have a fear of being hurt anymore. That changes everything. You stop being so defensive and people feel that. So you go into any situation without some preconceived idea of how it's going to go. Then often the other person senses that non-defensiveness and they relax.

How are you T.?

Question: Good, thanks. If you'd asked me this morning the first word I would have said is intense. Then after lunch I realised that saying it's intense is not going to make it any less intense. That really helped me in the meditations after lunch – stopping that conversation and relaxing into it. So it really helped me be much more present after I stopped that thinking, and thoughts about how nice it would be to stop and do some yoga. (laughter) I felt much more present. I'm not used to sitting so long so I do have to change position.

Linda: That's fine to do that because it is quite a while to sit. In some ways, in residential retreats it can flow a lot better because you can have rests in between. And we have a longer lunch break so people can have a sleep.

Question: So this shouldn't be an endurance kind of thing?

Linda: Why not?

Question: This feels like it has almost a violence in it which ends up being distracting.

Linda: I would say it is a bit of an endurance test, but I wouldn't say it's violent. It's intense but I know I started to crave that intensity after a while. It would feel almost too intense, and then I'd go away and have a rest, and then want that intensity again. That's a big reason we're doing this – we crave that intensity of aliveness. But it is true that sometimes you feel like you're being assaulted.

Question: Being new to this it's like a mountain to take in in one day.

Linda: It takes time. When I first started sitting and I would sit on a lounge and half-an-hour seemed like an eternity. So it definitely takes time to build up. So what sort of practice have you been doing?

Question: I do half-an-hour of meditation in the morning and half-an-hour meditation at the end of the day. And a few hours of yoga classes during the week. Although I said it's intense there's something that attracts me to intensity because I've been intensifying my practice during the last year and a half. I feel a stronger pull toward my path. So it comes together, in that sense.

Linda: The structure too, I feel is really important. I was in a monastery for a short time in Japan. We just got told what to do and we had to do it and not question it at all. It was actually a great practice because I think there is in all of us of: "I can do it my way, and my way is better." But it was actually quite a relief to surrender to that and do whatever they told you, whether it was sweeping dirt or doing something you thought was stupid. So yes, the structure is very valuable. And it's a great way to really break down that control of the mind, because it's just a very basic, simple structure and within that a lot happens. And in the end, of course the structure doesn't exist. But leading up to that I found it invaluable.

Question: I'd like to ask you about the sensation of emptiness and coldness that I experienced the first day. Is that related to anything?

Linda: I would say, it's a transitional period. As the mind is breaking down and you're not as emotional – you've been quite an emotional person – you can have periods like you've had. But really, they're a reaction to the absence of so much emotion.

So you won't always feel like that. And I know you've been changing a lot over the years. The emptiness turns into fullness. But there are periods during this practice where you do feel very nothing, cold – not depressed but not happy. But it does pass. (Thank God!) Everything passes.

Question: Another question. This is a question that I know people in our meditation group would like to ask but they would never dare to do so: related to people who struggle to meditate every day, I think it might be related to fear but I don't know. They just meditate when they come to our home every week or when we meet once a month. How can we help them, or should we rather leave them alone?

Linda: I'd say leave them alone, because the more you push them probably the more they'll resist. It's great that they're meditating at all. People will get into this when it's the right time for them. It's a waste of energy trying to make anyone do it. You can encourage them and provide an environment for them but don't push them.

My partner was quite into meditation for quite a while when I met him and I wasn't interested. Then when the time was right I just jumped into it.

Thank you everyone for coming.